

# A Palearctic Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica rufula* in Zambia

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**Une Hirondelle rousseline paléarctique *Cecropis daurica rufula* en Zambie.** Une Hirondelle rousseline *Cecropis daurica* de la sous-espèce paléarctique *rufula* a été capturée près de Kabwe, au centre de la Zambie, le 27 janvier 2009. Ceci constitue la donnée la plus méridionale en Afrique de ce taxon, qui est supposé d'hiverner principalement en Afrique de l'Ouest et de l'Est.

**B**etween November 2008 and February 2009, a Dutch team trapped Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* at roosts in central Zambia to obtain data on their wintering strategies. On 27 January 2009, mist-nets were set within a reedbed on Mafundzalo Ranch near Kabwe (14°18'425"S 28°27'700"E) and birds were attracted using a tape lure. The roost was used by *c.* 1,000 Barn Swallows, of which 82 were trapped, ringed and released. Among them a Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* was discovered which had apparently intended to roost with the Barn Swallows (Figs. 1–2).

The bird was in heavy moult with a primary wing moult score of 30 (555554100) and a tail moult score of 20 (555320). It was also replacing the head- and body-feathers, giving the bird an untidy appearance. The presence of dull brown contour feathers on the crown and mantle (as opposed to glossy blue-black) as well as short, dull brown outer rectrices indicated that it was a juvenile. Other biometrics were as follows: wing length (flattened and straightened): 124 mm, tarsus: 14.64 mm, mass: 22.5 g, fat score: 0, pectoral muscle score: 2.

It only became clear that the record was unusual subsequently, following correspondence between BvdB and PL. In Zambia, the race *C. d. emini* is resident near rocky hills in just a few areas on the country's northern and eastern borders at 1,130–2,200 m (Dowsett *et al.* 2008), thus the locality in question is >600 km from the nearest known areas of regular occurrence. It also became clear that the bird might have belonged to the migratory Palearctic race, *C. d. rufula*, which suggestion was later confirmed following correspondence with other ornithologists. Distinctive features included the pale underparts with striped breast and flanks (*C. d. emini* is plain rufous, occasionally with very faint streaking), the complete chestnut collar and particularly the bicoloured rump (*C. d. emini* has a uniformly medium or dark rufous rump) (Turner & Rose 1989, Keith *et al.* 1992). Biometrics were of no assistance with the subspecific identification.



**Figures 1–2.** Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* of the Palearctic race *rufula*, trapped near Kabwe, central Zambia, 27 January 2009 (J. Santing)

Hirondelle rousseline *Cecropis daurica* de la sous-espèce paléarctique *rufula*, capturée près de Kabwe, au centre de la Zambie, 27 janvier 2009 (J. Santing)

One apparent anomaly that required resolution was the extensive white visible on the mantle. Close inspection and comparison with specimens confirmed that this was a result of the white feather bases being visible due to the bird being in moult and missing several contour feathers. Furthermore, it appeared to be a common feature in moulting Red-rumped Swallows (of various subspecies) based on specimens.

Five races of Red-rumped Swallow occur in Africa (Keith *et al.* 1992). Of these, *C. d. domicella*, *C. d. melanocrissus* and *C. d. kumboensis* are resident in various parts of the northern tropics. *C. d. emini* is a bird of more mountainous terrain from south-east Sudan south to Zambia and Malaŵi. Finally, the principally Palearctic-breeding *C. d. rufula*, appears to winter mainly in West and eastern Africa, though data are sparse. The Zambian record therefore represents a new southerly limit for this taxon.

There are several other records of vagrant Red-rumped Swallows from Congo-Kinshasa (two), Zambia (one) and Zimbabwe (at least seven) (Keith *et al.* 1992, Harrison *et al.* 1997, Dowsett *et al.* 2008). None has been identified to subspecies though it seems more likely that these records pertain to overshooting migratory *C. d. rufula* rather than dispersal by the essentially sedentary *C. d. emini*. It is perhaps notable that several other Palearctic migrants that winter in the northern tropics have reached southern Africa as vagrants, e.g. European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*, Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* and Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (Hockey *et al.* 2005).

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